

Remarks

Claims 8-11 and 17-22 are pending for the Examiner's consideration, including amended claims 17, 18, and 20-22. No new matter has been introduced.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 16, and the allowance of claims 8-11. No changes have been made to claims 8-11 by way of this Amendment & Reply. Thus, claims 8-11 are believed to remain in condition for allowance. Claim 17 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 16. Thus, claim 17 (and claims 18-22 which depend thereon) is believed to be in condition for allowance. Allowance of claims 17-22 is solicited.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶2

Claim 16 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶2 due to a lack of antecedent basis for "the top surface" in line 6. Claim 16 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶2 is solicited.

Prior Art Rejections

Claims 1-7 and 12-15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,602,607 (Balsley). Claims 1, 4-7, 12 and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by European Reference No. 0251159 (Schleiermacher). Claims 1-7, 12-15 and 17-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,065,457 (Hoffman).

Claims 1-7, 12-15, 23 and 24 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 17-22 now incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 16, which has been cancelled. Withdrawal of the prior art rejections is solicited.

Conclusion

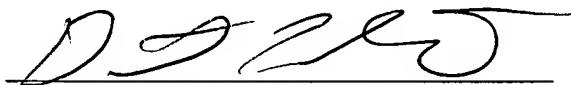
In view of the foregoing, it is believed that the application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. If the Examiner does not agree, then a personal or telephonic interview is respectfully requested to discuss any remaining issues so as to expedite the eventual allowance of the claims.

A Petition for Extension of Time is submitted concurrently herewith. Should any additional fees be required, please charge such fees to Steptoe & Johnson LLP Deposit Account No. 19-4293.

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Respectfully Submitted,

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